

Testimony for Public Hearing
The Government Affairs and Elections Committee
March 4, 2022

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Opposing: S.B. No. 184 (Raised) - *An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration as a Result of Covid-19 and Concerning Eligibility to Vote by Absentee Ballot.*

Opposing: H.B. No. 5262 (Raised) - *An Act Revising Certain Absentee Voting Eligibility Statutes.*

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco and distinguished members of the GAE Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong opposition** to SB 184 and HB 5262.

As a professional campaign operative of over ten years, I have borne witness to a variety of elections strategies and legal frameworks; I have developed, through experience, an understanding of what makes our participatory institutions function. Our institutions run on faith, on public trust - These raised bills undermine both.

It is generally accepted that, when voter fraud does occur, it usually occurs in the absentee-balloting process. This is because the absentee balloting process lacks the inherent safeguards of in-person voting, mainly the direct supervision of elections monitors. This shortcoming obviously introduces the possibility of third party interference in the voting process; it is important to remember that voter impersonation is not the only form of voter fraud, despite the political interest of some parties in convincing you that it is so, ballot harvesting operations have become increasingly common and have targeted our state's most vulnerable populations.

Additionally, the absentee-balloting process damages the sanctity of the "secret-vote" allowing the undue influence and intimidation of a third-party to pressure a voter into supporting a particular candidate. Typically, the State of Connecticut has balanced the need for elections security with the need to provide certain citizens with the ability to vote absentee by providing that right only to citizens who meet certain strict criteria. This process for receiving an absentee ballot has always been stringent, reserved only for those who had an absolute inability to vote on Election Day, such as our American Heroes fighting overseas. The bills being discussed today threaten to throw that delicate balance awry, allowing any voter to receive an absentee ballot without any significant restriction. You

propose to, then compound that insecurity, by involving the U.S. Postal Service and its employees – who are wholly unqualified to secure a ballot, or by asking Connecticut's voters to deposit their vote, a sacred expression of their voice, into an unattended metal box. I think the dangers of this strategy should be obvious.

It is also worth discussing the mistrust that this system is destined to breed. Connecticut's citizens aren't easily fooled, and they understand that the changes these bills proposes are an inherently flawed strategy for managing our elections. This understanding was reinforced by a litany of Democratic Town Committee Chairpersons across Connecticut who abused the absentee-balloting process during the 2021 municipal elections and faced no consequences for their actions. A recent Gallup poll asking citizens of each state whether or not they trusted their government ranked Connecticut in the bottom three out of the entire nation - less than 39% of Connecticut citizens are willing to say that they trust their government. It really is no wonder, how can we ask our citizens to trust their government when it can't even guarantee the integrity of our elections? This perception that our republican democracy is vulnerable is more dangerous than voter fraud itself – since, again, faith in our elections and the governments that result from them is essential for the survival of our participatory institutions. As public trust is lost, entire voting communities will begin to feel powerless to affect any real change by casting their vote, eventually they will be forever disenfranchised. I can't help but wonder if this is by design.

Furthermore, it is important to make one additional argument, which can be made outside the veiled politics of support or opposition for expanded absentee balloting.

Connecticut has a process of amending our State Constitution. Follow it. I am consistently disturbed, as are many others, by the repeated actions of the General Assembly to subvert the proper processes outlined in our founding documents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I stand in strong opposition to these bills and urge the committee to reject them.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brock L. Weber